

Testimony for Raised Bill No. 426
An Act Concerning Geographic Information Systems Data Sharing

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Madam Chair, Mr. Chairman, and honorable members of the Government Administration
& Elections Committee,

My name is Thad J. Dymkowski. I am the GIS Technician for the Town of Newington. In addition, I am the current President of the Connecticut Geographic Information Systems (GIS) User to User Network, which is comprised of GIS professionals and practitioners from academia, local and state government, and private sector throughout the state. I am here today to briefly speak to you with regards to Senate Bill 426, offer my support in favor of it, and provide information that I hope you will find useful during your deliberations.

For those of you unfamiliar with GIS, in the simplest of terms, it is a computer integrated system for storing, manipulating, and analyzing data that has a geographic and spatial aspect to it. GIS, as a tool allows interaction of location information with physical infrastructure such as telephone poles, utility poles, and fire hydrants; improves asset management; minimizes response times during emergencies; and advances decision making capabilities. Federal, regional, state, county, and local government agencies have realized the power of enterprise GIS to identify problems and respond to them efficiently.

GIS data provides an indispensable source of geographic reference for planning, municipal engineering, and public safety administration on an every day basis. In 2011 we experienced 2 historical weather events. If we would have had the data layers being sought in this Bill, I believe municipal and State agencies could have improved communications, positioning everyone to provide local level detail to the constituents, government officials, and the electric utility providers.

Constituents expect a higher level of customer service from their government leaders. Government and elected officials are charged with providing their constituents with more efficient and informed decisions. Utility data should be a part of that process.

Some may argue that this data poses a potential danger should it fall into the wrong hands. However, this can be easily negated by looking at the freely available and clearly visible information that exists today on websites like Google Earth™ and Microsoft's Bing™ Bird's Eye mapping. Additionally, if we look at our neighboring states, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New York, all three have GIS data for electric utilities available and offer it via the internet.

In closing, I would like to leave you with a few recommendations regarding the text of the Bill as it is currently written. It would be beneficial to all parties to explicitly define "geographic information systems or geospatial information systems data" with industry standard text within the bill. Copies of the data should be available in industry standard

electronic format capable of being imported into commercial software programs such as ESRI, MapInfo and others. Lastly, many local municipalities and regional planning agencies use private firms to provide them with GIS services. I recommend including language in the Bill that takes this into consideration.

I thank you for your time and I will gladly answer any questions the committee may have at this time.